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Kant on Moral Feelings, Moral Desires and the Cultivation of Virtue¹

Abstract. *This paper argues that contrary to what is often thought, virtue for Kant is not just a matter of strength of will; it has an essential affective dimension. To support this claim, I show that certain affective dispositions, namely moral feelings and desires, are virtuous in the sense that they are constitutive of virtue at the affective level. There is thus an intrinsic connection between an agent's practice of virtue and the cultivation of her affective dispositions.*

In diesem Beitrag wird für die These argumentiert, dass für Kant – anders als oft behauptet – Tugend nicht nur eine Frage der Stärke des Willens ist, sondern wesentlich auch eine affektive Seite hat. Zur Stützung dieser These wird aufgezeigt, dass bestimmte affektive Dispositionen wie moralische Gefühle und Wünsche deshalb tugendhaft sind, weil sie auf einer affektiven Ebene konstitutiv für Tugend sind. Es gibt also eine intrinsische Verbindung zwischen den Handlungen aus Tugend und der Kultivierung der affektiven Dispositionen des Handelnden.

Introduction

Kant defines virtue in terms of strength of will: “Virtue is the strength of a human being’s maxims in fulfilling his duty [...], the will’s conformity with every duty, based on a firm disposition” (MM 524–525 [Ak. 6, 394–395]).² This conception

1 Acknowledgments. I would like to thank the participants of the Kant’s Scots workshop at the University of St Andrews for their helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to thank Yoon Choi for her unwavering support and her insightful comments, and Dina Emundts, Sally Sedgwick, and an anonymous referee of this journal for their invaluable feedback.

2 Insofar as the following works by Kant are cited frequently, I have identified them by these abbreviations: A: Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View. CPR: Critique of Practical Reason. CJ: Critique of Judgment. G: Groundwork. LA: Lectures on Anthropology. LE: Lectures on Ethics. LM: Lectures on Metaphysics. MM: Metaphysics of Morals. TS: On a recently prominent tone of superiority in philosophy. For the sake of clarity in the references to Kant’s writings, I have chosen to use titles rather than the author/date system. I have also included a citation to the English translation from the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, followed by a citation to the German text of the Prussian Academy edition (Ak. volume and page reference) in brackets.

of virtue is usually understood by contrast with the Aristotelian view according to which virtue is the result of training ourselves to feel and desire in particular ways.³ According to this standard story, virtue, for Kant, is a matter of will, not of affective states.⁴ Yet in contrast with this view, I will argue that on Kant's account, certain affective dispositions, namely moral feelings and desires, are intrinsically virtuous in the sense that they are constitutive of virtue at the affective level. In this sense, contrary to what is often thought, virtue for Kant is not just a matter of strength of will; it has an essential affective dimension.

To support this claim, the first section begins by examining the relationship between the faculty of feeling and the faculty of desire. I suggest that we do not have two distinct sources of motivation (reason vs. desire) but one, the faculty of feeling, which gives rise to desires. On this basis, the second and third sections argue that the relationship between feeling and desire is the same in moral as in non-moral motivation. While section 2 focuses on the motivational role of the faculty of feeling, section 3 turns to the relationship between feeling and desire in moral willing. I show that insofar a desire is a representation accompanied by a feeling of pleasure, a moral desire is the representation of an obligatory end accompanied by a feeling of moral pleasure. This claim is crucial for the possibility of virtuous affective states since it suggests that moral feelings and desires are constitutive of moral willing. Finally the fourth section turns to the claim that there is an intrinsic connection between the practice of virtue and the cultivation of certain affective dispositions. As I argue, through its effect on feeling and desire, virtuous willing generates and enhances affective dispositions that are themselves intrinsically virtuous for they can only follow from virtue as its affective consequence.

1 The relationship between desire and feeling

While it is often underappreciated, Kant holds a tripartite view of the mind according to which our mental powers are constituted by three faculties: the faculty of cognition, the faculty of desire and the faculty of feeling.⁵ Each faculty gives

³ E.g., Nussbaum 2001, p. 172 and Annas 1995, p. 53.

⁴ On some accounts, affective states have at best an instrumental value for virtue, although some deny even this (e.g., Thomason 2017). See for instance Sherman 1990 for a defense of the instrumental value of affective states for moral agency.

⁵ These faculties are distinct in kind, so that contrary to common misconceptions, the faculty of cognition does not include "all the faculties of the mind": "We can trace all faculties of the human mind without exception back to these three: the faculty of cognition, the feeling of pleas-

rise to different kinds of mental states and has a distinct function in the general economy of the mind.⁶ Without getting into the details of Kant's account, what is crucial for the purpose of my argument is that this conception of the mind has important implications of our understanding of his account of desire. Although commentators often assimilate desires with feelings, affective states can take one of two forms, depending on whether they originate from the faculty of desire or the feeling of pleasure and pain.⁷ There is thus a distinction between the order of desire and the order of feeling.

According to Kant, a desire is an “impelling cause [...]” (LM 64 [Ak. 28, 254]). It urges me toward an action: “A desire, as a *striving (nisus)* to be a *cause* by means of one's representations, is still always causality, at least within the subject” (MM 492 [Ak. 6, 356–357]). Desires provide me with incentives to act in particular ways. “Habitual sensible desire[s]” (A 353 [Ak. 7, 251]) are what Kant calls inclinations (*Neigungen*): they are dispositions to have certain desires.⁸ Having an inclination means that I am prone to particular kinds of desires. But neither inclinations nor desires determine me, they merely influence me since I have an executive power of choice (*Willkür*). This capacity enables me to choose whether or not to act on an impelling cause. Once I have made my choice, the desire becomes an active desire – the activity of willing that a particular object be realised: “The faculty of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*) is a being's faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations” (CPrR 180 [Ak. 5, 50]). An act of will is thus the cause of the reality of the object of the desire I have chosen.

The faculty of desire in accordance with concepts, insofar as the ground determining it to action lies within itself and not in its object, is called a faculty to *do or to refrain from doing as one pleases*. Insofar as it is joined with one's consciousness of the ability to bring about its object by one's action it is called *choice (Willkür)*. (MM 374–375 [Ak. 6, 213])

ure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire.” (CJ 11 [Ak. 5, 206]) For a comprehensive map of the different faculties, their subfaculties, and their interrelations, see Wuerth 2014, pp. 221–234.

⁶ “To every faculty of the mind one can attribute an *interest*, that is, a principle that contains the condition under which alone its exercise is promoted.” (CPrR 236 [Ak. 5, 119]) For detailed discussions of Kant's account of the faculties and their respective functions, see Ferrarin 2015, pp. 25–57.

⁷ See for instance Grenberg's claim that “For the purposes of describing action, there is, however, little distinction to be made between the possession of a practical pleasure and that of desire.” (Grenberg 2001, p. 163)

⁸ See also: “lasting grounds of desire” (LA [Ak. 25, 1114]), “habitual desire” (MM 373 [Ak. 6, 212]). For a clear and detailed discussion of Kant's account of inclinations, see Frierson 2014, ch. 2.

The power of choice is the executive dimension of the faculty of desire.⁹ There is thus a *prima facie* distinction between what is in effect the causal power to realise the object of my desires and inclinations, namely the faculty of desire, and what has a causal influence on the power of choice, namely desires and inclinations. All desires and inclinations are caused by feelings: “all inclination and every sensible impulse is based on feeling” (CPrR 198 [Ak. 5, 72]).¹⁰ Feelings designate the relation between the subject and the object as (potentially or actually) pleasurable or painful, and trigger a desire to either realize or avoid the object.

[I] desire or abhor nothing which is not based on pleasure or displeasure. For that which give me no pleasure, I also do not want. Thus pleasure or displeasure precedes desire or abhorrence. (LM 247 [Ak. 29, 877–878])¹¹

The pleasure taken in a representation triggers a sensible desire for the object that is represented. The pleasure is thus the cause of the desire – its immediate cause. For instance, I have an inclination for gin and tonic, which explains why when I see a gin and tonic, I have an anticipatory feeling of pleasure followed by a desire to drink it. In this sense, Kant’s understanding of desire is much like our everyday notion of it: I have a desire to drink because I feel like drinking – the thought of the drink gives me an anticipatory feeling of pleasure that gives rise to a desire.

On this basis, the account of the relationship between feeling and desire just delineated may seem to apply only to the case of non-moral motivation. For it might be thought that in the case of moral action, the power of choice must

⁹ See also: “The faculty for acting according to satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the practical, active faculty of desire [...] active desire, or the faculty for doing and for refraining according to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the object, so far as it is a cause of the active power for producing it, is the power of free choice.” (LM 69 [Ak. 28, 254]) As Wuerth puts it, the power of choice (*Willkür*) is “the executive faculty of desire.” (Wuerth 2014, p. 245) The distinction between *Wille* and *Willkür* amounts to the distinction between the executive (power of choice) and the legislative (reason as ground of law): “Laws proceed from the will [*Wille*], *maxims* from choice [*Willkür*].” (MM 380 [Ak. 6, 226]) As Beck succinctly puts it, “*Wille* does not act. It gives only a law for the submission of *Willkür*, which does act.” (Beck 1960, p. 180) For discussions of the distinction between *Wille* and *Willkür*, see Allison 1990, pp. 129–132 and Wuerth 2014, pp. 239–243.

¹⁰ Note that for Kant, the converse is not true: not all feelings give rise to desires and inclinations – the feeling of the beautiful being a case in point. As Kant writes, “a feeling of pleasure which is independent of the determination of the faculty of desire [...] is incontrovertibly given.” (CJ 12 [Ak. 5, 207])

¹¹ See also: “through sensation it excites a desire for objects of the same sort” (CJ 92 [Ak. 5, 207]).

be motivated by reason alone.¹² However, the aim of sections 2 and 3 is to argue that the relationship between feeling and desire is the same in moral as in non-moral motivation; that is, moral willing, just like non-moral willing, involves being motivated by a feeling and acting on a desire. This claim is crucial for making room for the possibility of virtuous affective states, for it will allow me to conclude that their supposed impossibility is based on a misunderstanding of the relationship between feeling and desire in Kant's account of moral motivation.

2 The function of feeling and the feeling of respect

The argument defended in this section starts from a conception of feeling that I have begun to develop in previous work.¹³ Here I will simply lay out features of this view without trying to defend it in any detail. My account of feeling will thus be rather sketchy, but its sole purpose is to argue against the claim that for Kant moral motivation is based on reason and non-moral motivation is based on feeling and desire. On my reading, we do not have two distinct sources of motivation; we only have one, the faculty of feeling, which gives rise to desires.

Kant defines the feeling of pleasure and pain in terms of the promotion and hindrance of life: "Pleasure is the *representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with the subjective conditions of life*" (CPrR 144 [Ak. 5, 9n]). While this statement is not as clear as it could be, what it means is that the function of the faculty of feeling is to enable an agent to track and evaluate her activity and its conditions – its function is orientational.¹⁴ On this basis, we can make sense of

12 This type of claim motivates the intellectualist interpretations of Kant's ethics that preserve the purity of reason's role in moral motivation by defining it as the only real cause of acting from duty. For instance, as Reath notes, "to show that the will is directly responsive to practical reason, [...] [Kant] must avoid a view which makes use of a natural desire, or disposition, that moves us toward moral conduct [...]. Thus respect can be neither a source of motivation, nor a standard of moral judgment, which is independent of our recognition of the law" (Reath 1989, p. 11). By contrast with this view, I believe that we can retain the motivational role of the feeling of respect without threatening the purity of the moral motive.

13 See Cohen forthcoming a.

14 Kant hints at this definition of feeling in the following passage: "Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds *an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging* that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the given representation in the subject up to the

the painfulness of feelings of pain and the pleasantness of feelings of pleasure in light of the fact that they manifest the negative or positive effects of a representation upon the subject and her potential for activity. Anything that inhibits her potential for activity is painful while everything that facilitates it is pleasurable. The function of feeling is thus to make her aware of the representations that promote and those that hinder activity: “Life is the inner principle of self-activity. [...] Only active beings can have pleasure and displeasure. Subjects that are active according to representations have pleasure and displeasure” (LM 63 [Ak. 28, 247–248]).

According to Kant, feelings can be oriented either towards objects, or towards the subject. This is due to the fact that each faculty of the mind has a higher and lower sub-faculty. Whereas the lower faculties passively receive representations from objects, the higher faculties are themselves sources of representations. In the case of the faculty of feeling, its higher faculty is concerned with the subject, its lower faculty with objects.

The *lower* faculty of pleasure and displeasure is a power to find satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the objects which affect us. The *higher* faculty of pleasure and displeasure is a power to sense a pleasure and displeasure in ourselves, independently of objects. (LM 48–49 [Ak. 28, 228])

Insofar as lower feelings are object-based, when a sensible feeling of pleasure is prompted by the representation of an object, it triggers a sensible desire, as was spelt out in the preceding section: “inclination is thereby aroused” (CJ 93 [Ak. 5, 207]).¹⁵ By contrast, higher feelings are subject-based in the sense that they manifest the state of the subject’s mental agency.¹⁶

The feeling of respect for the moral law is one of these higher feelings – or rather, it is two of these feelings, for although this is not always sufficiently noted, the feeling of respect consists in both a feeling of pleasure and a feeling of pain. The polarized nature of the effects of the moral law on the faculty of feeling can be accounted for by the fact that it promotes the activity of one of our capacities while hindering that of another. On the one hand, the feeling of pain can be explained by the fact that the moral law is effectively an “infringement upon all inclinations insofar as they could be opposed to that law” (CPrR

entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state” (CJ 90 [Ak. 5, 204]; my emphasis).

¹⁵ See what Kant calls “animal pleasure” and pain, which corresponds to “animal” life as opposed to human and spiritual life, in LM 64 [Ak. 28, 248].

¹⁶ For an account of the function of higher feelings, see Cohen forthcoming b.

199 [Ak. 5, 72]). Since anything that hinders agency triggers a feeling of pain, I am conscious of the representation of the law and its categorical demands as an inhibition of my sensible inclinations, which causes a feeling of pain: “we can see a priori that the moral law as determining ground of the will, by thwarting all our inclinations, must bring about a feeling that can be called pain” (CPrR 199 [Ak. 5, 72–73]). On the other hand, since anything that furthers agency triggers a feeling of pleasure, the feeling of respect consists in a feeling of pleasure that manifests the capacity to determine myself rationally and thus independently of pathological incentives: “so far as I am conscious of this freedom in following my moral maxims, it is the sole source of an unchangeable contentment” (CPrR 234 [Ak. 5, 117]).¹⁷

While the feeling of respect is a feeling like any other insofar as it “is an effect on feeling”, it is essential to the preservation of its “peculiar” status that it is preceded by the moral law (CPrR 201 [Ak. 5, 76]).

Pleasure that must precede one’s observance of the law in order for one to act in conformity with the law is pathological and one’s conduct follows the *order of nature*; but pleasure that must be *preceded* by the law in order to be felt is in the *moral order*. (MM 511 [Ak. 6, 378])¹⁸

The autonomy of the act of will is guaranteed by the fact that the feeling of respect is a rational feeling – a feeling that is caused by practical reason.¹⁹ As Kant notes, while “every influence on feeling and every feeling in general” is “*pathological*”, the feeling of respect is “*practically effected*” rather than “sensibly effected”: “the incentive of the moral disposition must be free from any sensible condition [...] on account of its origin, [respect] cannot be called pathologically effected” (CPrR 201 [Ak. 5, 75]). What distinguishes the feeling of respect from all feelings “*received* by means of influence” is that it is “a feeling *self-wrought* by means of a rational concept and therefore specifically different from all feelings of the first kind [i.e., sensible feelings]” (G 56 [Ak. 4, 401]). In contrast with pathological feelings, respect is a feeling that is autonomously generated by rea-

¹⁷ Some commentators have suggested that rather than being a positive feeling in its own right, respect is merely the absence of feeling (e.g., Reath 2006, pp. 10–12). Some passages support this negative reading (e.g., CPrR 201 [Ak. 5, 75]) but others support a positive reading instead (e.g., CPrR 205 [Ak. 5, 80–81]). For other readings of the positive effect of the moral law on feeling, see Clewis 2009, pp. 129–130 and McCarthy 2009, p. 180.

¹⁸ See also: “That *pleasure* (or displeasure) which must necessarily *precede the law*, if the act is to take place, is *pathological*; but that which the *law* must necessarily *precede*, for this to happen, is *moral*” (TS 436 [Ak. 8, 395]).

¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the notion of rational feeling in Kant’s system, see Cohen forthcoming b.

son and thus independent from any sensible cause. As such, it can legitimately function as an incentive for the moral law: “respect for the moral law [...] must therefore be regarded as a subjective ground of activity – that is, as the incentive to compliance with the law” (CPrR 204 [Ak. 5, 79]).

Yet by emphasising that the feeling of respect is a rational feeling, one may object that I am in effect reintroducing a twofold conception of motivation according to which some feelings are rationally generated whereas others aren’t. If so, this may seem like a concession to those who believe that Kant is committed to the claim that there are two distinct bases for motivation, namely reason and desire.²⁰

As already pointed out, on Kant’s account, all acts of will have subjective grounds based on feelings, even those motivated by the moral law. Of course, the pleasure at play in the agreeable and the moral do not belong to the same level – the former is lower while the latter is higher. But they both belong to the same faculty, the faculty of feeling, and they are both practical pleasures in the sense that they are both “necessarily connected with desire” (MM 374 [Ak. 6, 212]). On the one hand, the power of choice is always free to act for the sake of the moral law since it is necessarily motivated by practical reason through the feeling of respect for the law. On the other hand, sensible inclinations motivate us insofar as feelings have an influence on our power of choice but do not determine us to act accordingly. Thus on my reading of Kant, we do not have two distinct motivational sources of motivation (either reason for moral action, or desire for non-moral action); we only have one, the faculty of feeling, which motivates the power of choice in the same fashion in both moral and non-moral motivation: “Every determination of choice proceeds *from the representation of a possible action* to the deed through the feeling of pleasure or displeasure.” (MM 528 [Ak. 6, 399]) However, a full defence of this claim requires that I show that any choice, whether moral or not, is not just motivated by a feeling, it also involves acting on a desire. The following section will explore this claim.

²⁰ I would like to thank an anonymous referee of this journal for pressing me on this point.

3 The relationship between feeling and desire in moral willing

On my reading, acting morally does not entail that we do not act on a desire. We do, but it is a pure moral desire rather than a natural desire that arises from sensible feeling.²¹

[I]f a pleasure can only follow upon an antecedent determination of the faculty of desire it is an intellectual pleasure, and the interest in the object must be called an interest of reason [...]. Although where a merely pure interest of reason must be assumed no interest of inclination can be substituted for it, yet in order to conform to ordinary speech we can speak of an inclination for what can be an object only of an intellectual pleasure as a habitual desire (*habituelles Begehren*) from a pure interest of reason; but an inclination of this sort would not be the cause but rather the effect of this pure interest of reason, and we could call it a sense-free inclination (*sinnenfreie Neigung*). (MM 374 [Ak. 6, 212–213])

Moral desires follow from moral feeling understood as the capacity to be moved by the moral law: “we have [...] a susceptibility on the part of free choice to be moved by pure practical reason (and its law), and this is what we call moral feeling” (MM 529 [Ak. 6, 400]).²² Thus acting on a moral desire is acting for the sake of the moral law insofar as the incentive of our action is a moral feeling.²³ On this basis, in accordance with Kant’s definition of desire, a moral desire is the repre-

21 For another defense of this claim, see Wood: “pure reason can determine the will because it is also a source of desire. The big mistake is to think that Kant regards moral truths (or our beliefs about them) as bringing about action in a way that is entirely distinct from (and even precludes) desire. For example: “A distinction between ‘having a motive’ and ‘desiring’ was introduced by Kant. For, according to Kant, we have in the thought that we ought to do some act a motive for doing it: but ‘having a motive’ does not here entail ‘having a desire’” (W. D. Falk, *Ought, Reasons and Morality*, p. 24)” (Wood 1999, p. 348).

22 Moral feeling “is the susceptibility to feel pleasure or displeasure merely from being aware that our actions are consistent with or contrary to the law of duty” (MM 528 [Ak. 6, 399]). As Packer notes, “When reflection operates on practical rules, the pleasure elicited is not the disinterested sort that results from the theoretical contemplation of nature but the practical kind, or moral feeling” (Packer 1989, p. 440).

23 As is now well-known, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant presents us with a set of four moral feelings, which he calls aesthetic predispositions to the concept of duty: moral feeling, conscience, love of others and respect for oneself (MM 528 [Ak. 6, 399]). While I cannot discuss them in detail due to lack of space, note that these feelings are “natural predispositions of the mind (*praedispositio*) for being affected by concepts of duty” – that is to say, they are “subjective conditions of receptiveness to the concept of duty” (MM 528 [Ak. 6, 399]). For discussions of these feelings, see for Wood 2008, pp. 34–35 and Geiger 2011.

sentation of an end accompanied by a moral feeling. But just as natural desires, it still needs to be incorporated into a maxim in order to move an agent to act.²⁴ Desires, even moral ones, do not determine the power of choice. Rather, they represent certain ends we can choose to adopt or not. In the case of moral desires, however, the ends they represent are not ordinary ones; they are ends that are also duties.²⁵ For they are grounded on the moral law: “it is not a question here of ends the human being does adopt in keeping with the sensible impulses of his nature, but of objects of free choice under its laws, which he ought to make his ends” (MM 517 [Ak. 6, 385]). Thus although this point is often misunderstood, the fact that these ends are grounded on the moral law does not entail that our pursuit of them is motivated by something other than a desire.²⁶ On the contrary, on my reading, insofar as to desire something is to have a representation of it accompanied by a feeling of pleasure, a moral desire is the representation of an obligatory end accompanied by a feeling of moral pleasure.

To flesh out our understanding of moral desires and their relationship with moral feelings, let’s examine the case of a moral action that is the realisation of an obligatory end, namely the duty of beneficence, which is the duty “to promote according to one’s means the happiness of others in need, without hoping for something in return” (MM 572 [Ak. 6, 453]). On my reading, acting on the duty of benevolence involves a moral desire for others’ well-being – what Kant calls “an aptitude of the inclination to beneficence in general” (MM 351 [Ak. 6, 402]). This inclination consists in the representation of the end of the duty of beneficence, namely the happiness of others, accompanied by a moral feeling of pleasure, namely the feeling of love of others. Insofar as it is the desire to realise an end that is also a duty, acting on it amounts to realizing one of our duties, namely the duty to promote “the happiness of *other* human beings, *whose* (permitted) *end I thus make my own end as well*” (MM 519 [Ak. 6, 388]). It is in this sense that our desire for others’ well-being is a moral desire, both in terms of its incentive, the moral feeling of love of others, and in terms of its end, the end of the duty of benevolence, the happiness of others.²⁷ Although there is no space to

²⁴ See Allison 1990, p. 40 for an account of the incorporation thesis.

²⁵ See MM 517 [Ak. 6, 385].

²⁶ “An *end* is an object of the choice (*Willkür*) (of a rational being), through the representation of which choice is determined to an action to bring this object about” (MM 513 [Ak. 6, 381]).

²⁷ According to Kant, the duty of beneficence is one of three duties of love, together with the duty of gratitude and sympathy. Although there is no space here to defend this claim, what I have argued of the former is true of the latter. The inclination to sympathy (MM 575 [Ak. 6, 457]) and the inclination to active gratitude (MM 573 [Ak. 6, 454–455]) are habitual moral desires that consist in the representation of the ends of the duties of love accompanied by a moral feel-

do so here, a similar analysis can be given for the other end that is also a duty, namely the duty to make our own perfection our end.²⁸ The moral desire for my own perfection consists in the representation of its end accompanied by the moral feeling of respect for myself. As Kant writes, “Love and respect are the feelings that accompany [*begleiten*] the carrying out of these duties” (MM 568 [Ak. 6, 448]). Moral feelings are associated with the realisation of these duties insofar as they provide incentives for it and generate desires to realise the ends they represent.

Yet one may object that these feelings and desires cannot replace the feeling of respect, that we cannot act on them and still act from duty. For Kant seems to state clearly that desires and inclinations cannot generate moral maxims: “Even an inclination to what conforms with duty (e.g., to beneficence) can indeed greatly facilitate the effectiveness of *moral* maxims but cannot produce any” (CPrR 235 [Ak. 5, 118]). However, in this passage, the inclination to beneficence Kant refers to merely “conforms with duty”. It is thus a sensible desire based on a pathological feeling rather than a moral desire that is constitutive of acting from duty. By contrast, when we choose to act on the moral desire to promote the happiness of others, not only do we have the moral feeling of love of others as the incentive²⁹, we do so for duty’s sake since the end the desire represents is an end that is also a duty, namely the duty of beneficence. In this sense on the interpretation put forward in this section, when we act from duty, the ground of the power of choice (*Willkür*) remains practical reason (*Wille*) and its incentive (*Triebfeder*) remains moral feeling (*moralisches Gefühl*). But insofar as this feeling generates a moral desire (*Begierden*) to realize our obligatory ends, moral

ing of love of others. Allen Wood has hinted at a similar claim: “The feelings in which ‘acting from duty’ consists are therefore more varied than the opening pages of the *Groundwork* might suggest. [...] ‘the motive of duty’ in this example [the sorrowful man who acts beneficently from duty] would be much more plausibly regarded as ‘love of human beings’ – that is, the sorrowful man helps others because he has moral grounds to care about them and make their well-being his end.” (Wood 2008, p. 35) The interpretation defended here allows us to make sense of this claim by showing the intrinsic connection between moral feelings, moral desires and virtuous disposition.

28 See MM 517 [Ak. 6, 385].

29 Another way of formulating this point is that Kant’s discussion of moral feelings in the *Metaphysics of Morals* suggests that the feeling of respect is but one of at least four distinct moral feelings. For recall that for Kant, the feeling of love of others and the feeling of respect for myself are moral feelings: they are “effects of the consciousness of the moral law on our mind”. As he notes, “consciousness of [these feelings] is not empirical in origin; it can, instead, only follow from consciousness of a moral law, as the effect this has on the mind” (MM 528 [Ak. 6, 399]). In light of this, different moral feelings would motivate different kinds of acting from duty. Unfortunately, I cannot defend this claim here.

willing is nothing but choosing to act on the moral desire to realise certain ends because they are duties. This claim is crucial for the possibility of virtuous affective states, for it suggests that certain affective states, namely moral feelings and desires, are constitutive of moral willing. What remains to be shown, however, is that there is an intrinsic connection between moral willing and these affective dispositions.

4 The intrinsic connection between the practice of virtue and affective dispositions

To support the claim that there is an intrinsic connection between moral willing and our affective dispositions, we need to examine the effect of the practice of virtue on the faculties of feeling and desire. For as I will argue, insofar as these effects can only follow from virtue as its affective consequence, they are intrinsically virtuous in the sense that they are constitutive of virtue at the affective level.

To make sense of this claim, let's return to our discussion of the duty of benevolence. According to Kant, acting on the duty of benevolence generates a feeling of love for the person helped: "*Beneficence* is a duty. If someone practices it often and succeeds in realizing his beneficent intention, he eventually comes actually to love the person he has helped" (MM 530 – 531 [Ak. 6, 402]). The repeated practice of the duty of benevolence generates and cultivates a feeling of pleasure in the well-being of the person helped: "Benevolence is satisfaction in the happiness (well-being) of others" (MM 571 [Ak. 6, 452]). This feeling of satisfaction arises because of our moral capacity for the feeling of love of human beings. By contrast with pathological love, it belongs to our "moral endowments" (MM 528 [Ak. 6, 399]).³⁰ Moreover, the practice of benevolence also generates a desire for more benevolence: "*do good* to your fellow human beings, and your beneficence will produce love of them in you (as an aptitude of the inclination to beneficence in general)" (MM 531 [Ak. 6, 402]).³¹ By acting benevolently out of duty, we strengthen our feeling of love for others, our desire to realise their happiness and thus our inclination to beneficent actions in general. On my reading, these

³⁰ See MM 530 – 531 [Ak. 6, 401–402]. For an account of the distinction between practical and pathological love, see Seymour Fahmy 2010.

³¹ See also: "if I love others from obligation, I thereby acquire a taste for loving, and by practice it becomes love from inclination." (LE [Ak. 27, 418 – 419])

benevolent feelings and desires are intrinsically virtuous. For they can only follow from virtue as its affective consequence.

To make sense of the claim that the affective dispositions that are the effect of virtuous willing are themselves virtuous, let's turn to Kant's discussion of the feeling of moral contentment. According to Kant, this feeling follows from virtue, that is habitually willing for duty's sake: "*contentment with oneself*" (*Selbstzufriedenheit*) "must necessarily accompany consciousness of virtue" (CPrR 234 [Ak. 5, 117]).³² While I cannot get into the details of Kant's account here, what matters for my argument is that the feeling of moral contentment only occurs as the effect of virtue.

I [Kant] must assume [a person] beforehand to be righteous and obedient to the law, i.e., to be one in whom *the law precedes the pleasure*, in order for him subsequently to feel a pleasure of the soul in the consciousness of his well-conducted course of life. (TS 436 [Ak. 8, 395])

The feeling of moral contentment cannot exist prior to virtuous willing; it can only follow from it.³³ Moreover, it is not the result of one-off moral willing but rather the result of repeated moral willing, i.e., the exercise of virtue: "I certainly do not deny that frequent practice in conformity with this determining ground can finally produce subjectively a feeling of satisfaction with oneself" (CPrR 171 [Ak. 5, 38]).³⁴ Moral contentment cannot be expected after the performance of a single act but only after one is "at least half way" moral (CPrR 171 [Ak. 5, 38]). It is the sign that one has already to some extent acquired a virtuous disposition. There is thus an intrinsic connection between the practice of virtue and the feeling of moral contentment.

³² "Contentment in the moral sense, however, always has reference to a state founded on consciousness of the law-abiding use of our freedom, and thus on the conformity of our own actions with the moral law. It relates, therefore, to the agent and the actions he has decided upon as a free being, and is truly a contentment with himself, since it can only be effected through a state of affairs in accordance with the moral law" (LE 382 [Ak. 27, 643–644]). See also G 54 [Ak. 4, 399], 106 [Ak. 4, 460], CPrR 171 [Ak. 5, 38], 234 [Ak. 5, 117], 235 [Ak. 5, 119]. For another instance of positive feeling of moral contentment, see Kant's discussion of sweet merit (MM 522 [Ak. 6, 391]).

³³ For a detailed discussion of moral contentment, see Walschots forthcoming and Elizondo 2016.

³⁴ Of course, Kant is clear that morality should not be a matter of habit (cf. MM 515–16 [Ak. 6, 383–384], 592 [Ak. 6, 479]). However, what is habitual in this context is the moral desire and its connection with virtuous willing, not the virtuous willing itself or the activity of the power of choice.

On my reading, there is a similar connection between moral willing and the benevolent feelings and desires under consideration: these affective dispositions manifest our virtuous disposition. Their occurrence signals its presence since they can have no cause other than virtuous striving, just as moral contentment can only be caused by virtue. As reliable signs of our virtuous disposition and its strength, they manifest our moral striving. This suggests that the affective dispositions generated by virtuous willing are themselves virtuous insofar as they can only follow from virtue as its affective consequence. Furthermore, insofar as they are in effect constitutive of virtue at the affective level, their cultivation enhances our moral striving itself. For strengthening our inclination to virtue in general reduces the influence of non-moral inclinations. The stronger our moral inclinations, the weaker, in relation, our sensible inclinations become. Thereby we become less susceptible to temptation.

Impulses of nature, accordingly, involve *obstacles* within the human being's mind to his fulfillment of duty and (sometimes powerful) forces opposing it [...]. Now the *capacity* and considered resolve to withstand a strong but unjust opponent is fortitude (*fortitudo*) and, with respect to what opposes the moral disposition within us, virtue (*virtus, fortitudo moralis*). (MM 513 [Ak. 6, 380])

In this sense, the practice of virtue is intrinsically connected to the agent's affective dispositions: they manifest as well as enhance her moral striving.

Conclusion

This paper set out to show that contrary to what is often thought, virtue for Kant is not just a matter of strength of will but has an intrinsic affective dimension. As I have argued, certain affective dispositions, namely moral feelings and desires, are intrinsically virtuous in the sense that they are constitutive of virtue at the affective level. They actively contribute to the strength of our ongoing commitment to the moral law and thus to our moral striving. To support this claim, I have shown that for Kant we do not have two distinct sources of motivation (reason vs. desire) but one, the faculty of feeling, which gives rise to desires. Since to desire something is to have a representation of it accompanied by a feeling of pleasure, a moral desire is the representation of an obligatory end accompanied by a moral feeling. As a result, the supposed impossibility of virtuous affective states is based on a misunderstanding of the relationship between feeling and desire in Kant's account of moral motivation. Just as non-moral willing, moral willing involves being motivated by a feeling and acting on a desire. On this basis, I have concluded that our practice of virtue is intrinsically connected to

our affective dispositions: they manifest as well as enhance our moral striving. It is in this sense that our affective dispositions and their cultivation are an essential part of leading a virtuous life.³⁵

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35 “[T]aking something to heart, which means to make a firm resolution to adopt any good advice or teaching, is the deliberate determination to connect our will with a sufficiently strong feeling for carrying it out. – The penitence of the self-tormentor is completely wasted effort; he should instead quickly apply his disposition to a better way of life” (A 339 [Ak. 7, 236]).

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